

# ***Gerry E. Studds* Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Administrative Capacity, Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Action Plan**

## **Overview**

Public scoping comments solicited during the *Gerry E. Studds* Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) management plan review (MPR) indicated concern that SBNMS may be inadequately funded to support effective resource management and protection. The Administrative Capacity, Infrastructure Development and Maintenance (ADMIN) Working Group (WG) concluded that an effective administrative framework and the development of infrastructure for the SBNMS are necessary to meet the commitments of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA).

The Administrative Action Plan (AP) describes the organizational structure and functions of the sanctuary program to address the primary responsibilities in marine resource protection, research and monitoring, exploration, evaluation, and education and outreach. This AP provides the framework for an improved administrative capacity, infrastructure development and maintenance function.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) is responsible for overall management of SBNMS. The NMSP supports the implementation of the management plan through funding of on-site operations. It is also responsible for establishing national policies and procedures to support specific issues in the sanctuary.

The SBNMS office establishes an annual budget setting out expenditures for program development, operating costs and staffing. Funding priorities are reviewed and adjusted annually to reflect evolving conditions of the sanctuary and overall national program priorities.

## **Description of the Issues**

The SBNMS initiated its management plan review public scoping process in 1998, and again in 2002 (See Appendix ADMIN.I). The process revealed several concerns relative to administrative capacity. The two issues addressed were:

- Base-Level Staffing and Program Support
- Infrastructure Development and Maintenance

The aforementioned concerns provided the impetus for the development of a sanctuary ADMIN WG to address the scoping comments. The WG developed the following ADMIN goal statement:

*To propose a prioritized resource development strategy aimed at developing adequate capacity to implement the goals and objectives of the working groups.*

*\*Timing constraints associated with the MPR process prevented the ADMIN WG from reviewing the final goals of the other WGs. Their needs have been addressed in this AP,*

*however, through the most current information provided by the SBNMS staff. It is envisioned that any WG goals not captured in the ADMIN AP will be addressed by staff and the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC).*

## **Addressing the Issues – Strategies for this Action Plan**

The Administrative AP describes the manner in which budget and staffing are organized to implement programs described in other APs. Marine educators, business and industry representatives, development directors, and concerned citizens provided regional input for the five strategies outlined in this AP.

- ADMIN.1 – Improve Overall Site Staffing and Support Capabilities
- ADMIN.2 – Maintain and Enhance Infrastructure of the Site
- ADMIN.3 – Develop a SBNMS Friends Group
- ADMIN.4 – Develop a SBNMS Volunteer Organization to Support Sanctuary Programs and Enhance Site Visibility
- ADMIN.5 – Assess Emerging Issues

Each strategy is detailed below.

### **STRATEGY ADMIN.1 – IMPROVE OVERALL SITE STAFFING AND SUPPORT CAPABILITIES**

- Objective: To improve site staffing and support capabilities for SBNMS programs.

#### ***Background***

Administrative roles for governing the sanctuary are divided up between the SBNMS Superintendent and the NMSP. NMSP provides the oversight and coordination of the 13 National Marine Sanctuaries by developing an overarching framework for resource management, setting broad priorities for addressing resource management issues, and directing general policy and program development. The SBNMS is responsible for onsite management and day-to-day operation of the sanctuary. Staff positions currently include:

- Sanctuary Superintendent: Responsible for overall administration of SBNMS programs and activities;
- Operations Coordinator: Responsible for MPR coordination, facilities renovation, and marine operations
- Education Coordinator: Responsible for education, public awareness and exhibit programs, and communications;
- Research Coordinator: Responsible for research and monitoring programs;
- SAC Coordinator: Responsible for planning and needs assessment, and Councils' policy and meeting coordination;
- Administrative Specialist: Responsible for budgetary control, general procurement, and office management;

- Administrative Assistant: Responsible for general office support and assistance (0.5 time);
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Analyst: Responsible for GIS data management and technical planning support;
- Maritime Archeologist: Responsible for assessing, inventorying and documenting heritage resources;
- Boat Captain: Responsible for maintenance and operation of research vessel (RV) Gannet (28-ft) and RV Sentinel (41-ft) (currently 0.5 time);
- Enforcement Coordinator: Responsible for enforcement support and multi-agency coordination—National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) Special Agent assigned to SBNMS.

Over the next five years, the activities proposed in the AP will necessitate an increase in staffing, either through the addition of permanent positions or through the effective use of contract services to meet these needs. The decisions on adding permanent staff or addressing needs through contractual support will hinge on a variety of factors such as the annual budget, available personnel positions through NOAA, and the nature of the tasks addressed. Consequently, the staffing plan described below outlines the needs to be addressed but is not prescriptive in indicating the mechanism to be used to provide that support. Those decisions will be made on an annual basis, weighing the factors described above.

### ***Strategy Summary***

This AP identifies new or renewed emphasis in the area of education, outreach, research, financial resource development, marine operations and law enforcement. The increase in program visibility, scientific capability and patrol frequency, which were called for by the public during the scoping process, will require enhanced investment in these areas. To address this concern, the sanctuary should support at minimum the equivalent of six new positions to be filled over the next two-five years: Outreach Coordinator (1), Management Planner (1), Marine Ecologist (1), Marine Operations Manager (1), and Enforcement Officer (2). Additionally, the existing Boat Captain position should become full-time.

The existing Education Coordinator position needs to be divided to add focus and separately address the education and outreach responsibilities. While functional overlap is implicit in much of the subject matter treated, there is a clear distinction in the constituencies that need to be served. The current Education Coordinator will serve public education needs across K-12 and continuing adult education programs. The focus will be on associated learning, curriculum support, etc. within the context of formal education. A new *Outreach Coordinator* position would be responsible for raising public awareness of the SBNMS. Duties would include but are not limited to volunteer program coordination, exhibits development and partnering, media communication, special events planning, etc. The *Outreach Coordinator* would also be a liaison with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) and the local Friends organization. It is anticipated that a full-time Volunteer Coordinator position eventually will be needed in addition to the Outreach Coordinator.

The existing Operations Coordinator position needs to be redefined—divided to separately address and better serve the diverse functions currently involved. These include: 1) a new *Management Planner* position which would be responsible for the ongoing tasks supporting management plan revision, and associated responsibilities which could include amending the designation document, drafting regulations, and developing ecological assessments or impact statements; 2) a new *Facilities and Marine Operations Manager* position which would be responsible for all facilities maintenance and development as well as all marine operations support and oversight. Related duties would include site emergency and evacuation planning, site security and safety, hazardous materials (HAZMAT) planning and operational coordination, permit review, and vessel and dive operations supervision. This position ideally would be filled by a NOAA Corps Officer.

A new *Marine Ecologist* position needs to be created to develop and facilitate research projects in order to better understand benthic community and ecosystem processes within the SBNMS. This position would collaborate with, and be under the supervision of, the site Research Coordinator. The function could be served either by a staff position or a revolving post-doctoral “fellow” position(s) in conjunction with partnering universities.

Two *Enforcement Officers* need to be dedicated to SBNMS to assure adequate patrol frequency and case support. The officers could be from either the federal NOAA OLE or state Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP), and would be funded by the sanctuary. The officers would be responsible for on-site/at-sea patrols to insure compliance with regulations and permit conditions and to serve interpretive enforcement functions. They would be under the supervision of the SBNMS Enforcement Coordinator, who is a NOAA OLE special agent.

The existing *Boat Captain* position should be made full-time to accommodate the operation and maintenance of the sanctuary’s growing fleet of vessels. Up until recently, the SBNMS operated a single boat. To meet the site’s current needs, a second boat was added to the sanctuary’s inventory in August 2004. To expand operating capacity to year-round, a new 48ft research catamaran is being built, with delivery scheduled for October 2006. The position would work under the supervision of the new *Facilities and Marine Operations Manager* position.

### ***Activities (3)***

#### ***(1.1) Maintain existing staff.***

The current staff listed above is responsible for undertaking existing projects and managing day-to-day operations.

##### *Actions:*

- 1.1.1 Examine current skills of employees and determine what additional training is necessary.

#### ***(1.2) Hire additional staff to support new programs.***

Site staffing is inadequate to support new programs. The capacities (positions) identified and listed above are presently missing from the sanctuary’s operational structure. At a minimum, these new hires are required to assure development of the recognized greater capacity needed.

Actions:

- 1.2.1 Hire an Outreach Coordinator.
- 1.2.2 Hire a Management Planner.
- 1.2.3 Hire a Facilities and Marine Operations Manager. The Sanctuary will Request Assignment of a NOAA Corps officer.
- 1.2.4 Hire a Marine Ecologist.
- 1.2.5 Hire two Enforcement Officers.
- 1.2.6 Increase Boat Captain's position to full-time.

**(1.3) Maintain and enhance operation of the SAC.**

The SAC serves as a forum of consultation and deliberation for the community and as a source of consensus-based advice to the Sanctuary Superintendent. Continuation and adequate support of the Council assures continued public input to management decision-making, while expanding public awareness about the sanctuary and challenging marine resource management issues. The involvement of the community is vitally important to successfully protect and manage sanctuary resources. The WG suggests that the NMSP continue to support the Council and ensure that meetings are held regularly.

Actions:

- 1.3.1 Provide funding for SAC workshops and related activities additional to core SAC budget support.

**STRATEGY ADMIN.2 – MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE SITE**

- Objective: To maintain and enhance the infrastructure capacity of the site.

***Background***

The management and administration of sanctuary programs relies on adequate facilities, vehicles and vessels for support.

Facilities

The sanctuary's administrative offices are located at 175 Edward Foster Road, Scituate, MA. Staff offices and conference room occupies a 6,800-square foot, three-story building in the former Scituate U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Station on First Cliff Point. An adjacent 2,200-square-foot, two-story annex houses a meeting facility and office space for visiting scientists, post-doctoral students and graduate interns. Both buildings are climate-controlled using geothermal technology. A renovation of the Administrative Building and the Annex was completed in 2004.

A two-story boathouse is built on a large pier over 250 ft in length, with two floating docks attached. The docks have the capacity to simultaneously berth one 41-ft vessel and three smaller boats. Additionally, the sanctuary has two moorings adjacent to the pier. Renovations are

planned for both the boathouse and pier to better utilize the existing capacity and to accommodate the new 48-ft vessel currently under construction.

### Vessels and Vehicles

SBMNS currently operates two vessels—RV Gannet (28-ft) and RV Sentinel (41-ft) — in support of research, monitoring and education activities. These vessels serve as the principal means for accessing the sanctuary. The sanctuary has contracted for the construction of a new 48-ft research vessel with plans for completion in early 2006. The sanctuary also operates four vehicles for passenger use and equipment transport.

### **Activities (7)**

#### **(2.1) *Maintain and acquire vessels as necessary.***

As enforcement needs expand, so will demand for increased sanctuary patrols and interpretive enforcement programs. Over the next three to five years, a vessel dedicated primarily to enforcement will be needed at SBNMS. A requirement of the vessel should be the ability to operate year-round. The 41-ft *Sentinel* (a former USCG patrol boat) should be assigned to that use.

#### **(2.2) *Identify, prioritize and fill equipment needs.***

The sanctuary will conduct an annual review to determine what equipment and technical support is necessary, including full computer work stations for each employee, guest work stations, geographic information system stations, network server, etc. The needs of the office will be prioritized and new equipment purchased as funding allows.

#### **(2.3) *Determine best use of sanctuary boathouse and renovate it.***

Renovations and/or modifications to the existing building to enhance sanctuary programmatic activities would be beneficial. Expanded facilities should include areas to support research and marine operations. A suitability and demand analysis, as part of a feasibility study, would assist in determining the most productive use of this facility. It also would contribute to development of the design concept and construction plan.

#### **(2.4) *Maintain a database for sanctuary permitting.***

The sanctuary issues permits for research, education and special-use activities in accordance with the NMSA. Maintenance of a permitting database will facilitate the efficient and timely issuance of permits on an as-needed basis.

#### **(2.5) *Maintain and enhance a SBNMS diving program.***

The sanctuary operates an active diving program in order to inventory and document shipwrecks, conduct research, characterize SBNMS resources, and conduct emergency rescues as necessary. We expect the equipment needs of this program to grow with the advent of expanded programs and a new research vessel.

#### **(2.6) *Enhance enforcement activities at the sanctuary.***

Enforcement of sanctuary regulations should continue to be supported as an ongoing activity through the Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) between NOAA's OLE and the sanctuary. The

sanctuary should develop an enforcement plan, utilizing a database of use and user patterns to assess enforcement needs and help target enforcement actions.

***(2.7) Expand patrol-related outreach and interpretive enforcement efforts.***

During patrols, officers will provide sanctuary information directly to users. Materials will be distributed as appropriate. Additionally, communications will be increased with constituents and user groups at marinas and community events.

**STRATEGY ADMIN.3 – DEVELOP SBNMS FRIENDS GROUP**

- ***Objective:*** To establish a SBNMS Friends Group to supplement financial resources and to enhance interest in and visibility of the sanctuary.

***Background***

Currently, there are no mechanisms to leverage funds for SBNMS programs, except by means of the NMSF. With increased demands on sanctuary resources, it is critical to develop mechanisms to increase public awareness of NMSP, raise visibility of SBNMS programs, and promote partnerships with constituents.

***Strategy Summary***

The ADMIN WG proposes that SBNMS establish a local Friends Group (non-profit 501C3) to provide supplemental funding to advance the sanctuary's mission. To plan and manage for a secure future, SBNMS needs to cultivate personal and local relationships to enhance financial support and interest in sanctuary programs. These efforts will be accomplished by:

- Creating a local presence and advocacy that demonstrates familiarity with sanctuary needs
- Promoting local visibility and heightened public awareness
- Offering administrative flexibility
- Building relationships and partnerships with other groups and stakeholders that value the resource
- Developing a unique identity for the sanctuary (locally and nationally)
- Identifying a broad range of local funding resources for education, outreach and research programs

***Activities (1)***

***(3.1) Support the creation of a SBNMS Friends Group.***

The Friends Group is expected to be developed in three phases to support special SBNMS programs, projects and events.

- ***Phase 1:*** Administrative Working Group (December 2003 to August 2004)
- ***Phase 2:*** Interim Board Development and 501C3 Certification (1 year)

- Phase 3: Transition to fully functioning Friends Group (6 months from completion of Phase 2)

The Friends Group will work with the NMSF to supplement financial resources and is envisioned to be independent within 3 to 5 years. Phase 2 is outlined below.

#### Phase 2: Overview

Create the draft “Organizational Development Plan” for the Friends Group which should include a mission statement supportive of the sanctuary, elements for a strategic fundraising plan and a projected budget. Members of the ADMIN WG and others should assist in the development of the Plan. The Interim Board is expected to complete its work within 1 year. The Interim Board, working in collaboration with the SBNMS Superintendent, will accomplish the following:

- Seek guidance and advice from the NMSF;
- Write proposals to the NMSF, the NMSP and/or others for interim support in the establishment of the Friends Group (i.e., assist with initial funding);
- Develop a job description for Friends Group Coordinator;
- Secure the legal entity to develop application for 501C3 certification;
- Nominate a slate of board members for the Friends Group;
- Identify potential Friends; and,
- Maintain communication with regional groups and other organizations with common interests in the sanctuary.

### **STRATEGY ADMIN.4 – DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE VOLUNTEER PLAN/ PROGRAM TO SUPPORT SANCTUARY PROJECTS**

- Objective: To provide a framework for the development and operation of a SBNMS Volunteer Program

#### ***Background***

The ADMIN WG proposes to establish a program for volunteer coordination to support sanctuary activities and functions. Volunteers are a necessary and vital force in achieving the goals of the NMSP.

Currently, SBNMS volunteers are few in number. They support activities and functions on an as-needed basis due to the lack of organizational infrastructure. Volunteers typically assist with events such as the Annual Fish Count or SBNMS Poster Competition, or as stakeholder representation for the SBNMS SAC.

There are many opportunities where volunteer programs are needed including but not limited to: education and outreach in schools and communities, special fund-raising events, staff support, research and scientific monitoring.



Establishing a local volunteer program at SBNMS meets NOAA's Strategic Vision for the 21st century, which articulates that NOAA is a partner with communities in protecting, restoring, and managing coastal and ocean resources.

### ***Strategy Summary***

Many functions of the SBNMS and the NMSP can be enhanced through the establishment of volunteer programs that may provide essential support for sanctuary projects, and build community support and commitment to the goals and strategies of the NMSP. The WG recommends that a formal volunteer program be developed in phases, focusing initially on outreach and scientific monitoring.

### ***Activities (2)***

#### ***(4.1) Develop a SBNMS volunteer program.***

This program would focus on team-building, communications and support activities.

##### *Actions:*

##### *4.1.1 Develop SBNMS Volunteer AP.*

The sanctuary should identify and prioritize volunteer program plan objectives. Programmatic areas may include but are not limited to the following: naturalist, education/outreach, science, events and boater/diver corps.

##### *4.1.2 Develop an internship program.*

The sanctuary needs short-term specialized assistance which leverages staff resources and provides education and training for students for careers in marine science.

##### *4.1.3 Develop a post-doctoral funding program.*

The sanctuary needs highly specialized technical and scientific capability applied to short-term specific needs of programmatic areas. The sanctuary should partner with research institutions to share costs for post-doctoral fellowship positions.

##### *4.1.4 Develop and support international exchange of volunteers between SBNMS and other sanctuaries such as Silver Bank Humpback Whale Sanctuary (Dominican Republic).*

Both SBNMS in New England and Silver Bank Humpback Whale Sanctuary in the Dominican Republic share the same humpback whales. Establishing a "sister-sanctuary" volunteer exchange relationship between SBNMS and Silver Bank will support education and research exchanges between the two countries. This programmatic exchange will also promote visibility of cross-boundary "endangered" sanctuary resources and could lead to increased support for the sanctuary program.

**(4.2) Maintain and enhance SBNMS diver corps.**

Emphasis on recruitment and training of new diver corps volunteers will provide a much-needed service for sanctuary Maritime Heritage Resource projects as well as research and education/outreach programs. The diver corps assists with shipwreck inventory, documents sanctuary resources, and has the potential to elevate sanctuary visibility.

**STRATEGY ADMIN.5 – ASSESS EMERGING ISSUES**

- Objective: To identify emerging issues for consideration.

***Activities (4)***

**(5.1) Assess opportunities for federal, state and local government grants as well as foundation grants.**

For example, National Science Foundation (NSF) grants are available to scientists conducting research in the sanctuary that can include an education and outreach component.

**(5.2) Seek involvement with the Massachusetts Ocean Management Initiative as well as other regional and Gulf of Maine initiatives.**

**(5.3) Draft a process to build relationships in conjunction with future broad policy initiatives emerging from the Pew Ocean Report and the Draft Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.**

**(5.4) Investigate new technologies that could expand the capacity and efficiency of the sanctuary.**